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Accepting the idea that "professional activity in teaching is related to the closeness with which teaching decisions approach the individual learning needs of pupils" would necessitate several changes in the traditional approach to teacher preparation. First, courses would focus on the diagnostic decision-making aspect of teacher behavior. Second, the interactive aspect of teaching would be examined, and students would be exposed to various dimensions of classroom interaction and their relationship to diagnostic behavior. Third, instruction in large teaching systems (like the phonics approach in reading) would be broken down into component elements in order to prepare the teacher to fit instruction to a particular group of individual learners. At least four types or levels of laboratory experiences, or combinations of them, would be needed to implement such a revised teacher education program, including a training experience to aid students in identifying and gaining proficiency in using basic tools necessary for teaching, an experience focusing upon the diagnosis and analysis of teaching situations, an experience requiring requiring students to implement diagnoses in teaching situations with some control over variables, and an experience similar to student teaching or internship but directly focusing on the basic concept of professional behavior. (SG)

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LABORATORY EXPERIENCES AND PROFESSIONALLY FOCUSED TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS: A PRESCRIPTIVE POINT OF VIEW*

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The problem of appropriate laboratory experiences for students in teacher education is always a fascinating one. Experienced teachers and teacher educators can usually think of two or three types of early experiences they wish they had encountered as students which might have improved their own educational insights. It might be assumed that sometimes it is through a process of using the opinion of experienced teachers that laboratory experiences are selected and put together. More likely, though, is the probability that the laboratory aspect of teacher education in large part reflects the basic goals and orientation of the total program.

Program orientation seems to have played a large part in affecting the laboratory experiences afforded candidates for teaching. Programs in which teacher education is seen as essentially consisting of the production of "liberally" educated craftsmen have centered emphasis on a short period of apprenticeship in the form of student teaching. Educators who have viewed the essence of teacher preparation as consisting of understanding child growth and development have created programs in which prestudent teaching experiences are focused on varied opportunities to observe and analyze child learning and behavior. Some programs have exhibited a tendency to attempt to acquaint students with the many tasks that teachers must carry on as part of their jobs. This has resulted in laboratory experiences that might be called job orientation. Students in these programs undertake attendance at board of education meetings, decorate bulletin boards, and do all sorts of other things in experiencing the role of the teacher. Other programs show concern for the general attitude and personal development of students and carry on laboratory activities directed at this end. These laboratory experiences send students into the community bringing them face to face with social and educational problems of our time.

The variations in program orientation and laboratory experience emphases indicate two things. First, that there is little real agreement regarding what the products of teacher education programs should really know and be able to do, and second, that though we pay a great deal of lip service to professionalism and preparation that is professional in nature, we have yet to organize programs that are professionally based.

If we look again at the programs and laboratory experiences described above we find that the first basically rejects trying to prepare a professional, the second stresses study of children rather than professional behavior, the third undertakes vocational orientation and the last deals in the area of personal development which seems to be just as valid for general education. None of these begins from an analysis of professional behavior and proceeds to develop laboratory experiences directed at specifically affecting professional competence.

If teaching is to attain fully recognized status as a profession the public must accept the notion that there is highly specialized knowledge

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necessary for the practice of teaching and that practitioners make use of this knowledge. Our teacher education programs as well as the performance of the products of these programs will need to make visible the nature of this knowledge to a greater extent than is evident today.

Can we characterize the professional behavior of teachers so that we might conceptualize a unified teacher education program? Granted teachers do many things and true it is often nearly impossible to separate out professional functions from nonprofessional job necessities, but it should be possible to identify those aspects of professional behavior that are central and critical, and which require higher levels of specialized knowledge and competence. Such a view of professional activity could then be used as the central unifying core for the development and structuring of the teacher education program.

There are a number of possible approaches to this identification, but as an example of this sort of structuring let us assume that at the heart of the work of the professional teacher is the process of decision-making or the process by which the teacher decides what and how to teach, as well as decisions about next immediate steps during actual teaching. We might further structure this conception by specifying that professional activity in teaching is related to the closeness with which teaching decisions approach the individual learning needs of pupils. In other words, the heart of professional behavior on the part of teachers is a diagnostic decision-making process in which the teacher is constantly trying to assess and provide for the individuals who compose a given group of learners. This point of view rejects the idea that professional teaching takes place blindly or that professionals spray teaching around and leave it to learners to grab what they can.

If we were to accept such a notion as the basis for developing teacher education program and laboratory experiences we would make several changes in our traditional approach to the preparation of teachers. First of all, the typical courses directed at affecting the teaching of students would be sharply focused on the diagnostic decision-masking aspect of teacher behavior. They would stress giving students not only a point of view regarding their role, but more important the basic equipment necessary for carrying on the function. Treatment of learning goal identification for pupils as well as diagnostic techniques and procedures would become a most important part of these courses. In a course like the teaching of reading stress would be given to ways in which students might identify realistic objectives for reading instruction for children and how they might assess actual reading needs on the part of children and move to make decisions about necessary next steps for meeting objectives. They would need to study and weigh alternative instructional approaches to next steps and how instruction might be organized as well. This aspect of the changed view would stress heavily the typical areas of planning, selection of materials and teaching approaches as well as evaluatory factors of professional work.

The second important dimension would focus on the interactive aspect of the teacher's work. Diagnostic emphasis would be viewed as it relates to the minute-by-minute behavior of the teacher in a classroom. In this area students would be exposed to various dimensions of classroom interaction and their relationship to diagnostic behavior. For instance, feedback from learners would have important attention. Experiences designed to increase

sensitivity to feed back as well as interpretation and use of this important element would be undertaken. Analysis of teaching situations from the standpoint of the feedback factor, as well as its appropriate use in terms of teaching goals and data available about learners, would be one part of such as undertaking.

Also important as an additional concern in a revised teacher education emphasis should be the treatment of method or approach in teaching. The emphasis on diagnosis should cause a modification in traditional approaches to method. Typical gross instruction in which large teaching systems like the phonics approach in reading instruction would be broken down into component elements, so that the teacher preparing to teach reading would be concerned about organizing instruction that uniquely fitted a given cluster of individual learners. We would view the teaching of traditional curricular areas from the standpoint of pedagogical alternatives available to carry on a specific kind of teaching and possible learning outcomes resulting from the approach. Hopefully the reliance on gross methods or systems for teaching could be replaced by smaller components that could be intermixed and interchanged resulting in more personalized and unique instruction for individual learners. This development would require further study for identification of teaching elements as well as work in revision of tranditional teaching materials.

This treatment of certain dimensions of a revised focus for teacher education in no way describes a complete program for teacher education. It does not specify the number or types of courses to be included, but it does specify that these be directed at an overall conception of professional behavior. Lacking specific course structure makes difficult the identification of appropriate laboratory experiences for such a program, but certain general guides can be established. We can break laboratory emphases down into parts necessary for developing learnings necessary for professional behavior. At leave four types of laboratory experiences or combinations of these would be necessary in implementing a revised teacher education program.

A basic type of laboratory experience resulting from this analysis would be what might be called a training laboratory for lack of a better term. This level of laboratory would be organized much like those used in the sciences and would be based on the assumption that there are specific skills, procedures, and understandings which require personal activity on the part of students. These laboratories would be tied to specific courses in the teacher education program and would focus on the extension of learnings and the practice of certain fundamental skills necessary for professional behavior. Students in certain courses might use laboratory time to deal with the selection and use of instructional materials. They might also undertake practice in the use of data gathering procedures related to specific curricular areas. This training level laboratory structure would aid students in identifying and gaining competence with some of the basic tools necessary for teaching.

A second level of laboratory experience should be focused on the diagnosis and analysis of teaching situations. These experiences very similar to the clinical dimension in established professions would call upon students to deal with real or simulated pedagogical situations which call for a decision or prescription on the part of the teacher. This level

would require the student to analyze and propose a decision without the necessity for implementing it at that time. Feedback for the student would come in the form of critique from the instructor or master teacher. These experiences would call upon students to use many of the tools developed in earlier laboratories as well as to make use of the basic diagnostic decision-making process. Important to the success of such laboratories would be not only the availability of worthwhile situations, but also an adequate amount of supporting data upon which to base decisions.

A third level of laboratory experience would require students to undertake the implementation of diagnostically arrived at decisions in teaching situations where some control was exercised over variables. Too often we have a tendency to place students in very gross whole-group teaching activities in which analysis becomes very difficult because of the great number of variables operating. This can be controlled to some extent by restricting the size and nature of the learning group and by careful selection of material to be taught. These situations carried on under guidance and with the possibility for instructor feedback and critique would allow students to carry on the teaching act in a restricted way while contending with fewer factors and focusing on central aspects of the process.

The fourth level of laboratory experience growing out of a revised view of teacher education would have most of the elements of typical student teaching or internship, but with one difference. Rather than being an open-ended series of activities with many characteristics of apprenticeship, it would focus directly on the basic coneption of professional behavior begun much earlier in the program and would carry students through a series of phases in which they had an opportunity to put into practice prior learnings. This overall focus would modify the nature of work carried on by both the supervising teacher and the college supervisor in the situation. Both the guidance of student teacher activities and the evaluation process carried on by these professionals would reflect and attempt to sharpen the central professional behavior of student teachers.

Basically the treatment of the elements of laboratory experiences directed at a professional focus for teacher education are an attempt to spell out a logical progression of laboratory levels. It does not include the psychological dimension so far as the teacher education students as learners are concerned. Actual implementation of this conception into a program would need to recognize these psychological factors and so the arrangement and phasing might differ greatly from institution to institution. What is important at this stage is that a professional organizing focus be the basis for the structuring of these experiences.

This hasty overview of a teacher education program and accompanying laboratory experiences is a personal analysis of one way in which a conception of professional behavior might be used to structure the elements of a preparation. To be sure it is biased and primitive. There are numerous other analyses which might be made of professional behavior. Of primary important is the need for teacher education to replace the broad vocationally oriented programs so typical at present with an approach that is more limited and focused. Hopefully such an approach would allow for greater accumulation of learning and insight on the part of students as we would finally have identified certain basic skills, understandings, and competencies that would

be defined. At present we seem to spend far too much time acquainting students with the general role they will play in the schools and too little in trying to build professional competence. We make too little use of the specialized knowledge available to us in trying to cover the whole spectrum of teacher tasks.

An analysis of central professional behavior does leave out many learnings that have traditionally been part of teacher education programs. It is a direct attempt to focus and sharpen the instructional program and should be recognized as such.